

WYOMING STATE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
September 16, 2015

Members present:

Bobbie Frank, WACD
Larry Bentley, WDA
Dennis Sun, Wyoming Livestock Roundup
Gillian Bee, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Martin Grenier, DU
Ken Hamilton, WYFB
Darrel O'Neal, Northern Arapahoe Tribe
Reg Phillips, Dubois/Crowheart Conservation District
Caitlin Youngquist, UW Extension
Roger Stockton, NRCS
Justin Derner, ARS
Julie Kraft, SCWP
Miles Edwards, WARWS
Todd Even, FSA
Robert Maul, Campbell County Conservation District
Jennifer Hinkhouse, Campbell County Conservation District
Jim Pike, NRCS, Cheyenne WY
Lisa Ogden, Natrona County Conservation District
Jennifer Zygmunt, DEQ
John Crisp, WSFD
Bryan Anderson, WSFD
Paul Eitel, NRCS
Mark Shirley, NRCS
Joe Parsons, Saratoga/Encampment/Rawlins Conservation District
Jamison Jewkes, NRCS
Rusty Schwartz, NRCS
Rigo Lopez, NRCS
Travis James, NRCS
Ben Bonella, NRCS
Steve Jones, Meeteetse Conservation District
Steffen Correll, Meeteetse Conservation District
Nolan Hicks, Meeteetse Conservation District
Ronald Oldman, Northern Arapahoe Tribe
Dave Pellatz, Thunder Basin
Shaun Sims, WACD

Members via teleconference:

Glen Whipple, UW Extension
Bob Mountain, USFS
Mark Hogan, USFWS
Peter Monahan, EPA

Grant Stumbough, NRCS Partnership Liaison started the meeting at 10:05 AM with introductions around the room, discussed the agenda, and introduced Astrid Martinez, Wyoming State Conservationist.

State Conservationist Update – Astrid Martinez

Astrid then welcomed the group and updated the committee on several issues and recent meetings:

Sage Grouse Initiative 2.0. Announcement by Sec Vilsack and Chief Weller

- NRCS plans to commit approximately \$211 million to SGI over the life of the 2014 Farm Bill.
- \$93 million in habitat restoration through EQIP
- \$100 million in conservation easements through ACEP
- \$18 million to support SGI staff
- What does this mean for WY by 2018?
 - Restore and enhance 900,000 grazing acres
 - 100 seeding acres
 - 145,000 acres of weed management
 - 100,000 ft. of fence marking
 - 19,000 acres of conifer removal
 - Protect an additional 105,000 acres which will aid in our meeting 87% of the SGI goal of \$250,000 million.

We are working on new guidance for the new practices that we will implement under our new plan, this will include conifer removal, invasive work and others. SGI sign up will have its own batching day. We hope to roll out guidance by first of October if not before.

Toolkit

- Completed Toolkit 8.0 training to about 100 employees. Jenny Szewc, Tim Becket, and Jim Haverkamp, provided the training with positive results.

Programs

A September 18, 2015, batching date has been announced to begin accepting applications for FY2016. All applications on file at the local NRCS Field Office as of this date will be considered for funding in FY2016 for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) programs.

An earlier batching date was chosen for FY2016 to allow Field Offices time to conduct field visits and complete on-site planning during the fall months.

Participants may contact their local field office to set up an appointment for a field visit now to look at resource concerns and discuss structural or management practices that may be considered to address the resource concerns identified on their land.

National Initiatives

Organic, High Tunnel, On-Farm Energy, National Water Quality Initiative, Sage Grouse, Working Lands for Wildlife.

States initiatives: forestry, water quality/livestock waste, soil health, stream bank and/or riparian area, invasive species, livestock protection.

AMA- Agricultural Management Assistance- funds will be used to assist in planning windbreaks/shelterbelts and/or renovating existing windbreaks and remove Russian olive/salt cedar.

We will be asking for proposals for the National Water Quality Initiative. Proposals are due October 23, 2015.

- A second batching date of February 19, 2016, may occur depending on funds availability.

Obligations total: preliminary numbers

CSP \$407,375	EQIP \$8,638,735	AMA \$167,533
Salinity \$341,699	SGI \$1,397,739	NWQI \$596,337
ACEP \$717,413	CStP \$2,597,981	

Oversight and Evaluation (O&E) report update:

In summary, No significant issues or concerns were found during the O&E spot check of the FY 2015 EQIP applications and FY 2015 CStP contract renewals.

Local Work Group Reports and Recommendations

This year, each Local Work Group (LWG) was asked to provide a report of local resource priorities and program recommendations as a result of recent meetings. Below is a list of LWG responsibilities as per NRCS Policy.

Title 440 – Programs, Part 501, Subpart B -- Responsibilities of Local Working Groups (LWG)

1. Ensure that conservation needs assessment is developed using community stakeholder input.
2. Utilize the conservation needs assessment to help identify program funding needs and conservation practices.
3. Identify priority resource concerns and identify, as appropriate, high-priority areas needing assistance.
4. Recommend USDA conservation program applications and funding criteria, eligible practices, and payment rates.
5. Participate in multicounty coordination where program funding and priority area proposals cross county boundaries.
6. Assist NRCS and the Conservation Districts with public outreach and information efforts and identify educational and producers' training needs.
7. Recommend state and national program policy to the STAC based on resource data.
8. Utilize the conservation needs assessment to identify priority resource concerns that can be addressed by USDA programs.
9. Forward recommendations to the NRCS designated conservationist or Farm Service Agency County Executive Director, as appropriate.
10. Adhere to standard operating procedures identified in Title 440, CPM, Part 501, Subpart B, and Section 501.14.

Caitlin Youngquist, UW Extension presented the report for Division 1 (Big Horn, Park and Washakie):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- It was suggested we find a way to help small acreage producers.
- More money allocated to the local subaccounts versus the state accounts
- It was suggested that the NRCS look at the opportunity of pastoral systems and how it will help to improve our soil health. Pastoral systems such as no-till, cover crops, and cross fencing help to keep the soil fertile.
- Move soil quality up on the STAC priority resource concerns list since it encompasses many, if not all, of the other listed resource concerns. Also, take into consideration how we re-organized the entire list of STAC priority resource concerns.

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations

- Change the soil health category to a 75% payment percentage rate

Priority Resource Concerns

1. Soil Quality
2. Water Quality
3. Grazing Lands Management
4. Excessive Erosion
5. Prevention of the Conversion of Ag Lands to non-ag use
6. Irrigation Water Management
7. Wetlands
8. Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
9. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
10. Energy
11. Forest Health
12. Other

Reg Phillips, Dubois/Crowheart Conservation District presented the report for Division 2 (Fremont and Hot Springs):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

****Division II Local Work Group (LWG)** recommends the ranking tool and cost share list (PPS) be available before the Local Work Group meetings are held so the groups can help with local concern questions. This could give locals more authority and allow them to rule out what doesn't fit the area.

****The group** is very concerned about Wyoming allotted EQIP funds going to State and National Initiatives which reduces the available funding for local priority work. In 2015, over half of the \$9.7 million allocated to Wyoming went to State and National Initiatives. There is a high percentage of State and National initiatives applications funded compared to a very low percentage of Division applications funded. In 2015, 13 of the 65 ranked applications (requests for \$2,266,000) were funded. The group recommends that an additional Divisional Sub-Account Priority be established titled "Local Priority" or "Local Resource Concerns". This 5th Sub-Account would be used to fund local resource concerns and that screening and ranking tools be developed to address the "Local Priority" or "Local Resource Concerns" Sub-Account. An example would be a cheat grass control project in the Lower Wind River Conservation District, a tree planting project in the Dubois Crowheart Conservation District and a water quality project in the Popo Agie Conservation District. These projects are unique to each district but could all fall in the "Local Resource Concerns" Sub-Account.

****We need to find ways to lower the bar to help get applications to contracts.** Producers can't meet the qualifications such as a grazing plan, eligibility and cultural

resources at the time of application. Cultural resource requirements are unclear and grazing plans are not always necessary.

****The group recommends that the requirement of a grazing plan on deeded lands be eliminated when BLM allotments contain federally managed, state and deeded lands. We recommend that allotment management plans be recognized as grazing plans.**

****Division II LWG recommends that the payment schedule for Sage Grouse Initiative incentive payments on federally managed land be reviewed and revised. An example is a \$2.20/acre payment on land that may take 10 acres to produce one AUM. The Participant would receive \$22 on those 10 acres and pay the BLM in Wyoming \$1.69 to \$6.41 for one AUM depending on whether or not the producer owned the livestock.**

****We recommend that less money be allocated to the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and that the money be made available to local districts for technical assistance. We recommend that no more CSP applications be accepted. We strongly recommend that 25% of field office time be allocated to technical assistance and district programs not tied to Farm Bill programs. Current Farm Bill programs drive field office staff time.**

****The Division II LWG requests that the local District Conservationists and the Conservation District Boards be given back the authority to make local decisions based on local needs and priorities. The current process is driven “top down”.**

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations: None.

Priority Resource Concerns

- 1) Water Quality
- 2) Soil Quality/health
- 3) Irrigation Water Management
- 4) Grazing Lands Management
- 5) Excessive Erosion
- 6) Wetlands
- 7) Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
- 8) Energy
- 9) Prevention of Conversion of Ag land to non Ag land—May be a future urgent concern
- 10) Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- 11) Forest Health

Julie Kraft, Sublette County Weed and Pest presented the report for Division 3 (Lincoln, Sublette, Sweetwater, Teton, and Uinta):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

1. Cultural Resource SHPO Agreement – please get this signed and allow DCs to be at the table to discuss the named ditch issue. This seems to be delaying a lot of things without accomplishing much.
2. Streamline smaller contracts.
3. Reduce program paperwork amount and work to eliminate SAM/DUNS spam to producer when they apply for NRCS programs.
4. Sage Grouse – provide information to employees before it is listed so we can answer producer’s questions about working with NRCS.
5. STAC – should be re-formatted to allow for members to provide more input and interaction instead of talking at them.
6. Technical assistance is requested to be elevated in priority for local FO. Sometimes TA without financial assistance is what is needed by our constituents and partners and it is very difficult for NRCS to provide anymore. Funding for salaries should not be based solely on the implementation of Farm Bill programs.
7. WY and OR work together on the ALE ranking worksheet with the DCs input.
8. Recommend a NRCS Reality Specialist be employed within Wyoming or the Intermountain West to assist in implementing the conservation easement program.

Recommendations to the ALE Ranking Worksheet

National Ranking Factors and Scaling	Maximum Points	Comments
Percent of prime, unique, and important farmland in the parcel to be protected (0 points for 50 percent or less, 4 points for every percent above 50 percent)	16	
Are landowners a historically underserved group, small scale farmer, limited resource landowner, new or beginning farmer or rancher or veteran landowner (3 points for Yes, 0 points for No)	3	

<p>Percent of cropland, pastureland, grassland, and rangeland in the parcel to be protected</p> <p>(0 points for 33 percent or less, 4 points for 33 percent or less, 8 points for more than 33 percent and less than or equal to 50 percent, 16 points for greater than 50 percent)</p>	16	
<p>Ratio of the total acres of land in the parcel to be protected to average farm size in the county according to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture (USDA - NASS - Census of Agriculture)</p> <p>(0 points for a ratio of 1 or less, 7 points for ratios of 1.0 to 2.0, 15 points for ratios of greater than 2.0)</p>	15	
<p>Decrease in the percentage of acreage of farm and ranch land in the county in which the parcel is located between the last two USDA Censuses of Agriculture (USDA - NASS - Census of Agriculture)</p> <p>(0 points for decrease of 0 percent or less, 1 points for decreases of 0 to 5 percent, 5 points for decrease of 5 to 10 percent, 9 points for decreases of 10 to 15 percent, 15 points for decreases of more than 15 percent) (National Mandate – 0 points for 0 percent or less)</p>	15	
<p>Percent population growth in the county as documented by the United most recent United States Census (Census Bureau Home Page)</p> <p>(0 points for growth rate of less than the State growth rate, 4 points for growth rate of one to two times the State growth rate, 7 points for growth rate of two to three times the State growth rate, 15 points for growth rate of more than three times the State growth rate) (National Mandate – 0 points growth rate less than the State growth rate)</p>	15	

<p>Population density (population per square mile) as documented by the most recent United States Census (Census Bureau Home Page)</p> <p>(0 points for population density less than the State population density, 4 points for population density of 1 to 2 times the State population density, 7 points for population density of 2 to 3 times the State population density, 15 points for population density of greater than 3 times the State population density)</p>	15	
<p>Existence of a farm or ranch succession plan or similar plan established to address farm viability for future generations</p> <p>(0 points for no plan, 7 points for a plan, 15 points for plan documented and performed by industry professional)</p>	15	
<p>Proximity of the parcel to other protected land, including military installations</p> <p>(0 points easement offer area (EOA) boundary greater than 3 miles from the protected land boundary, 4 points EOA is greater than 1 miles but less than 3 miles from protected land, 7 points EOA is within 1 mile of protected land boundary, 15 points EOA boundary adjoins protected land boundary)</p>	15	
<p>Proximity of the parcel to other agricultural operations and agricultural infrastructure</p> <p>(0 points if EOA boundary greater than 3 miles in proximity, 4 points if EOA is greater than 1 miles but less than 3 miles in proximity, 7 points EOA is within 1 mile in proximity, 15 points EOA boundary adjoins)</p>	15	
<p>Parcel ability to maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to agricultural use</p> <p>(15 points if the parcel links two non-continuous corridors of protected agricultural use, 6 points parcel expands agricultural use protected area, 0 points parcel does not increase a protected agricultural use area)</p>	15	

Parcel contains historical or archaeological resources that will be protected by easement area (15 points if Yes, 0 points if No)	15	
The grassland in the parcel will benefit from the protection under the long-term easement (15 points if Yes, 0 points if No)	15	
Currently enrolled in CRP in a contract that is set to expire within a year and is grassland that would benefit from protection (15 points for Yes, 0 points for No)	15	
Total Points for National Ranking Factors	200	

State Ranking Factors (Maximum of 200 Points)

<p>1. Are the offered acres located in a contiguous block?</p> <p>>10,000 acre block (15 pts.) 5,000 to 10,000 acre block (10 pts.) 2,500 to 5,000 acre block (5 pts.) <2,500 acre block (0 pts.)</p>	15	Needs to be reworded, the intent of separate parcels was not fully captured with this language. Suggest the acreage amounts be reduced or removed and just focus on number of parcels if they are separate. Also, people do not like receiving 0 points. You can provide points for all answers.
--	----	--

<p>2. What percent of the parcel is currently managed under a plan for the following: noxious weeds, infestation, erosion (gully, sheet/rill, wind, and irrigation), grazing or irrigation inefficiencies, or expired CRP acres?</p> <p>a. > 95% (10 pts) b. 94% to 91% (9 pts) c. 90% to 81% (7.5 pts) d. 80% to 71% (5 pts) e. < 70% (0 pts)</p>	10	Needs to be re-worded, not clear, not consistent enough across DCs to interpret this meaning. WY provided 0 points to all applicants in FY15.
<p>3. Is the parcel located within a Wyoming Game & Fish designated crucial habitat priority area or an enhancement habitat priority area?</p> <p>a. Crucial Habitat Priority Area (15 pts.) b. Enhancement Habitat Priority Area (10 pts.) c. No (0 pts)</p>	15	
<p>4. Offered acres include a diversity of habitat types. Habitat types will be based on WY SWAP (Terrestrial Habitat Types) WGFD SWAP web link</p> <p>a. 8-11 Habitat Types (50 pts) b. 5-7 Habitat Types (25 pts) c. 2-4 Habitat Types (15 pts) d. Less than 2 Habitat Types (5 pts)</p>	50	
<p>5. What is the water availability on grazed lands?</p> <p>a. Adequate, well-distributed, year-round stock water (10 pts) b. Adequate, well-distributed, seasonal stock water (5 pts) c. Seasonally inadequate or poorly distributed water (0 pts)</p>	10	
<p>6. Current grazing system designed by NRCS, BLM, rancher or other qualified provider which utilizes a monitoring method from the Wyoming Rangeland Monitoring Handbook.</p> <p>a. Yes (15 pts) b. No (0 pts)</p>	15	A concern is that the landowner may not get points since NRCS may not have had the time to finish a CTA plan. What if it was worded that one has been requested of NRCS? Or some points given for that effort.

<p>7. Sage-grouse Core Areas and the ALEP will include habitat management activities to improve and protect Sage-Grouse habitat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Majority of offer is located in a Core Area (25 pts) b. Majority of offer is located in Current Range (15 pts) c. Offer is not located in Core Area (0 pts) 	25	<p>The question and the answers do not align with one another. The question should be based on geographical location of the application and not management. The management plan is required and should be given points.</p>
<p>8. Proximity of offered acres to protected land – Protected land must be within ½ mile and at least 640 acres with no threat of conversion or significant surface disturbance (ie, Perpetual Easements, Federal or State owned lands)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes (15 pts) b. No (0 pts) 	15	
<p>9. Offered acres are included in an existing Groundwater Management Plan (Groundwater recharge areas designated by SEO office)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes (10 pts) b. No (0 pts) 	10	<p>Please provide a map of this area for reference.</p>
<p>10. T&E species are present on offered acres and habitat will be managed to protect existing T&E species.</p>	25	

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations

NONE

Priority Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Lands Management
2. Water Quality
3. Irrigation Water Management
4. Invasive Species (added this year)

5. Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
6. Prevention of the Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Use
7. Wetlands
8. Fish & Wildlife Habitat
9. Forest Health
10. Energy
11. Soil Quality
12. Excessive Erosion
13. Other

Bob Maul, Campbell County Conservation District presented the report for Division 4 (Campbell, Johnson, and Sheridan):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

1. CBM-reclamation funding.
2. Rec. training/workshops, Dave Rosgen to discuss how to fix issues.
3. Increase Incentives to make SGI more saleable and relax the requirements.
4. Track measurable success of the SGI program.
5. Address HR turn around & understaffing concerns.
6. More Technical Assistance is needed.
7. Small Acreage Problem & Help needed.
8. Need more Forestry dollars and education.

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations

NONE

Priority Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Lands Management
2. Water Quality
3. Irrigation Water Management
4. Streambank/ Riparian Area Protection
5. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
6. Forest Health
7. Wetlands
8. Prevention of the Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Use
9. Excessive Erosion
10. Energy
11. Soil Quality
12. Other

Paul Eitel, NRCS presented the report for Division 5 (Crook and Weston):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Develop a riparian incentive improvement and education program

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations

NONE

Priority Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Lands Management
2. Water Quality
3. Forest Health
4. Stream bank/Riparian Area Protection
5. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
6. Energy
7. Excess Erosion
8. Soil Quality
9. Prevention of Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Use
10. Wetlands
11. Irrigation Water Management
12. Other

Lisa Ogden, Natrona County Conservation District presented the report for Division 6 (Converse, Natrona, and Niobrara):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- More research needs to be done on the benefits of the 15-month deferment required after cheat grass treatment.
- 303d subaccount added under the State's Water Quality Account
- Include the use of natural gas as a power source for the operation of irrigation equipment as an acceptable cost-share practice

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations

- Change the Irrigation percentage rate on the payment schedule to 70% (from 60%) to match grazing.

Priority Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Lands Management
2. Water Quality
3. Irrigation Water Management
4. Forest Health
5. Energy
6. Prevention of the Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Use
7. Excessive Erosion
8. Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
9. Soil Quality
10. Wetlands
11. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
12. Other

Joe Parsons, Saratoga/Encampment/Rawlins Conservation District presented the report for Division 7 (Albany and Carbon):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

1. The current requirement of completing 528 – Prescribed Grazing for all EQIP applications involving stock water development or fencing creates a backlog of applications that cannot be ranked due to the field time it takes to complete 528. The LWG suggests splitting the standard into 2-3 tiers based on the complexity of the application. For SGI and any contracts that will pay on 528 as a management practice, leave the standard as is. For applications involving practices in one to a few pastures, have the local planner complete a range trend or other assessment. If the trend is up or static, the planner will complete an AUM inventory based on averages in the Ecological Site Description Guides.
2. Because most of Wyoming's EQIP Forestry funding goes to the north east part of the state, the LWG would like to see an emphasis placed on targeting funds for beetle kill in other areas of the state. Wyoming State Forestry personnel were present at the meeting and indicated they could write Forest Management Plans.
3. The lack of a completed soil survey in Carbon County hampers efforts to do sound conservation planning (lack of soils information/ecological sites for prescribed grazing plans, and also soil physical property information for irrigation water management). The lack of delineated ecological sites requires much more mapping time when completing inventories for Prescribed Grazing. The LWG would like to see an emphasis placed on completing the soil survey for Carbon County.

4. A biological review and concurrence with US Fish & Wildlife Service was required for a project this year because it was planned to be installed before July 15th. The LWG would like an evaluation of how the Migratory Bird Treaty Act will affect implementation rates for Farm Bill Programs. Not allowing project implementation from May 15-July 15 for most projects will reduce the construction season significantly and result in a lower contract implementation rate. The LWG would like to see guidance on what practices this will affect and if it is statewide. Allow practices that have a low probability of take to proceed during the nesting season. Follow other federal agency protocols for having a local biologist make a determination if practice installation during the nesting season will result in a take.
5. The LWG would like to see the vacant technician position in Saratoga filled. This position services all three Carbon County offices. This will assist with the engineering and getting preliminary design information completed so that program applications can move forward.

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations

- The LWG recommends that the Payment Rate Schedule for 580-Streambank Stabilization have additional components that are stratified into the size of the river the project is on. Divisions could be based on average annual bankfull measurements or average peak flow in CFS. Currently, there is one rate (\$/linear foot) for all size of streams resulting in an underpayment on large river systems that require more quantities in terms of rock, toewood, etc per linear foot than small streams. Districts that have done projects in the past could provide actual cost data to support this.

Priority Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Lands Management
2. Irrigation Water Management
3. Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
4. Wetlands
5. Prevention of the Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural use
6. Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds
7. Excessive Erosion
8. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
9. Forest Health
10. Water Quality
11. Energy
12. Soil Quality

Jim Pike, NRCS presented the report for Division 8 (Goshen, Laramie and Platte):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

- EQIP Manual 515.I-6 it states the following:
 - (4) Changes in Production System
 - (i) Practices that facilitate a beneficial cost-effective change in production system (i.e., change in agricultural land use) provided that all of the following criteria are met:
 - The change in production system results in a higher level of conservation benefit, such as a lower intensity land use.
 - The producer will implement a management practice that supports the change in production system.
 - The practices are necessary to address a natural resource concern that is associated with the new production system.
 - Cost-effectiveness can be documented.
 - (ii) **Example 1.**— Producer is transitioning highly erodible cropland to grazed pasture. The operation currently does not support or maintain livestock, but transitioning to grazed pasture will address erosion related resource concerns and result in a higher level of conservation benefit. Program support is allowed to implement fencing (CP 382), watering facility (CP 614), prescribed grazing (CP 528) and other facilitating practices that are necessary to establish the new production system and address the resource concern.
- Where we run into problems with this is there is a lot of times that we are not able to write a grazing plan because we cannot meet the minimum requirements of the grazing plan. Therefore, we cannot pay on the grazing plan. What we would like to do is suggest that as long as a management plan is written under CTA then we would not need to pay for the practice. There are some situations where it is not feasible to write management practice because maybe the producer doesn't own livestock and does not wish to farm anymore. So wouldn't it be better to plant it back to vegetation rather than leaving it as weeds??
- Ogallala Aquifer initiative needs to increase payment incentives in order for producers to participate.

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations

NONE

Priority Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Lands Management
2. Water Quality
3. Irrigation Water Management

4. Soil Quality
5. Excessive Erosion
6. Wetlands
7. Prevention of the Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agriculture Use
8. Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
9. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
10. Forest Health
11. Energy
12. Other

Ron Oldman, Northern Arapahoe Tribe presented the report for Division 9 (Wind River Indian Reservation):

Recommendations to the State Technical Advisory Committee

1. An applicant should be able to use “historical use” for control of the property so that they may participate in USDA-NRCS programs.
2. Recommendation is to target funding for watering sources on Range units.
3. Recommendation is to ask for a “variance” from the 3-pasture rotation requirement for water development on rangelands.
4. Recommendation is to assist landowners or producers with gated pipe on a linear foot basis instead of what is currently used and that is on a per pound basis.
5. Recommendation is to use AMA to upgrade or improve off farm irrigation (headgates) in fracture structure.
6. Recommendation is to increase the cap that is in place on Center Pivots. Increase from \$50,000 to \$60,000.
7. It is a recommendation to note that Wildhorses are a problem and an issue when Sage Grouse habitat is concerned. More attention and or money should be directed to this problem.
8. Recommend for FSA and NRCS to conduct a training workshop on the reservation to inform producers about conservation programs available.

Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations

Recommendation to increase the cap that is in place on Center Pivots. Increase from \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Priority Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Management
2. Irrigation Water Management
3. Water Quality
4. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
5. Wetlands
6. Forest Health
7. Excessive Erosion
8. Prevention of the Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Use
9. Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
10. Energy
11. Soil quality
12. Noxious Weed Control

At the conclusion of these presentations, Grant Stumbough told the group that NRCS will be responding to LWG recommendations within 90 days as per national policy requirements. He also explained that recommendations to change law could not legally be implemented, but recommendations that will only require a change in state policy and/or operating procedures would be strongly considered. Astrid will be working with the Wyoming NRCS Leadership Team in making her final decision regarding the implementation of LWG recommendations.

Grant Stumbough expressed the importance of the STAC prioritized list of resource concerns and how it will be used to assist in determining state program priorities and to ensure that Wyoming NRCS is addressing resource concerns that are important to the state and Local Work Groups. The list is prioritized every year to adjust to the environment as well as accommodate new resource concerns. The list was based on a weighted average of all nine (9) LWG resource concern priorities and then initially compiled as a draft list. The draft list was discussed and there were no additions, modifications, or deletions to the list. The STAC prioritized list of resource concerns follows:

2015 State Technical Advisory Committee Prioritized Resource Concerns

1. Grazing Lands Management
2. Water Quality
3. Irrigation Water Management
4. Streambank/Riparian Area Protection
5. Prevention of the Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Use
6. Excessive Erosion
7. Wetlands
8. Soil Quality
9. Forest Health
10. Fish and Wildlife Habitat
11. Energy
12. Invasive Species

Roundtable Discussion

Astrid Martinez addressed numerous questions and requested recommendations from the committee as per the Roundtable discussion which are highlighted as follows:

- Much discussion on the difference and functionality of state accounts versus division subaccounts and if additional subaccounts and dollars are needed to provide local people more dollars to address local resource priorities? However, Astrid explained that if the state accounts were to be allocated to division accounts then those dollars would be divided 9 times (for each LWG) which would then result in insufficient dollars to effectively address larger and more expensive resource improvement projects. Currently there are enough dollars in the state account to address larger projects at the local level. The committee recommended to leave the state accounts and division subaccounts as currently structured and give the system a chance to work.
- Bobbie Frank suggested a Fact Sheet be developed to explain the difference between state accounts and division subaccounts and the purpose and benefits of both accounts to effectively address local resource concerns.

Astrid then asked the State Technical Advisory Committee to make a recommendation regarding the following LWG Payment Schedule and Percentage Rate Recommendations:

- Change the soil health category to a 75% payment percentage rate – **the Committee recommended to leave “as is.”**
- Change the irrigation percentage rate on the payment schedule to 70% (from 60%) to match grazing - **the Committee recommended to leave “as is.”**

Closing:

Astrid closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their participation. She also mentioned that our next State Technical Advisory Committee meeting will be scheduled sometime in December.